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Introduction- Libraries and information centers are service units held with the responsibility of providing varied information services based on a number of resources. It covers tangible assets, namely library building, equipment, furniture, information resources and staff. The intangible element has been the information services provided by the libraries. The tangible assets and intangible services of libraries are changing greatly due to the development and changes in the area of information technology. Libraries may not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about great design. It's easy to assume the user experience of a library is limited to navigating a maze of bookshelves in reality; there has been a recent push among librarians and library professionals to apply userexperience best practices to the design of their services. Library UX professionals include librarians and library staff members who specialize in improving the user experience of their libraries through research and design.

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Evaluating the Effect of Academic Library users' Experience towards Library Patronage in State Universities in Sri Lanka: Development of a Conceptual Framework

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I. INTRODUCTION

Libraries and information centers are service units held with the responsibility of providing varied information services based on a number of resources. It covers tangible assets, namely library building, equipment, furniture, information resources and staff. The intangible element has been the information services provided by the libraries. The tangible assets and intangible services of libraries are changing greatly due to the development and changes in the area of information technology. Libraries may not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about great design. It's easy to assume the user experience of a library is limited to navigating a maze of bookshelves in reality; there has been a recent push among librarians and library professionals to apply user-experience best practices to the design of their services. Library UX professionals include librarians and library staff members who specialize in improving the user experience of their libraries through research and design.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The academic library plays a pivotal role in supporting teaching, learning and research. In support of this role, the library needs to provide resources, facilities and services which will enable students to fulfill their academic potential. In order to perform these activities, libraries constantly need to reassess their services to ensure they meet the needs of all patrons (Becker, Hartle & Mhlauli, 2017). Librarians need to determine how to allocate their limited resources to foster service innovations and to meet users' dynamic needs and priorities for their services effectively.

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They need to be continuously monitored how their key user groups prioritize the existing services and identify new needs and opportunities for library services (Esson, Stevenson, Gildea, & Roberts, 2012; Spalding & Wang, 2006). Most academic libraries do not market their information resources and services very well; this is responsible for the low patronage and underutilization of information resources and services by library clientele observed that marketing library and information is not practiced as expected. (Kaur, 2007). Traditional quantitative metrics and measures used by libraries (e.g. statistics on footfall, holdings, loans, renewals, database use, downloads, views, social media followers, etc.) do not reveal anything about the success or quality of the interaction experienced by the library user and ultimately the value or impact that this has on the user (Appleton, 2016).

As libraries continually strive in their efforts to continuously improve the user experience (UX), they must develop measurements that are more meaningful than those traditionally selected and reported. There are a number of excellent examples and standout strategies that libraries have used towards that end. Many of those focus on their users' approach to studying, the uses of the digital and print collections, to their interactions with the design elements of library spaces, to its interface with a library's programs and services, all under an umbrella that touches on the very heart of human behavior itself. Encompassing anthropology, psychology, information science and much more, UX is now emerging in librarianship too with an exciting cross-sector adoption. Through looking at problems and challenges within libraries through the UX filter, in this research able to apply new techniques and approaches to age-old problems, thereby developing new strategies (Cronin, 2014).

Today, the dimensions or components of library service quality in libraries are not fully understood from the user perspective. In an age of accountability and increasing competition from the for-profit sector this lack of knowledge places libraries in a precarious position. Library administrators must be able to evaluate how well service is provided from a user perspective in order to



allocate resources wisely, and to plan for new and emerging services and needs. To evaluate library service quality, it is first necessary to understand fully the elements of service quality and the interplay of those elements in the academic library context from the user perspective.

Library administrators must have the means to assess performance across a spectrum of libraries in order to isolate best practices to emulate, and to understand how well libraries perform comparatively within peer cohorts. In order to assess library service quality in libraries, librarians need a multipurpose tool capable of wide and practical application using grounded theory. It is accepted in the services marketing literature that the customer perspective is essential in assessing service quality. To evaluate service quality in libraries, it is first necessary to ascertain what constitutes service quality in the minds of users in libraries.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study was measuring service quality of the libraries in Sri Lanka using SERVQUAL gap analysis model from the users' perspective and determine the overall library's performance towards meeting users' expectations.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- 1) To study the relationship among the key determinants of user experience towards the library patronage.
- 2) To investigate the relationship between library user experience and Library patronage.
- 3) To study the mediating effect of library user experience in the relationship between the determinants of library user experience and the library patronage.
- 4) To investigate the moderating effect of library user attitude in the relationship between the library user experience and the Library patronage.

IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

A significant component in assessing the benefits of the user experience in the library is communication. In a continuous effort to ensure that the library programs, services and experiences are those that connect with the users, the library must provide multiple means of two-way communication to determine its validity and worth. Therefore, UX must be uppermost in the minds of the library team so that it can better assess and report its users' successes and/or shortfalls.

Over the years, the profession has studied UX in light of two basic themes: did the user experience result in a successful interaction that yielded an outcome that the user expected and was the overall quality of the user experience maintained at a high level throughout? Keeping those themes in mind, many

libraries have even created a position, known as the UX Librarian, similar to that found in business and industry whose duties could be defined as an individual in the following example who: will work to develop relationships with the Libraries' various user communities, and utilize information gathered from these relationships to identify and prioritize the users' needs as they pertain to the Libraries. Working collaboratively, the incumbent will be responsible for the development and implementation of programming, activities, and projects designed to improve the overall user experience of the Libraries (Florida International University, 2012).

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The primary objectives of the library and information professionals of the libraries are to satisfy the needs of the end users of the system who are ultimately students and the educators. Apart from these all, the library supporting staffs, the librarians and the learning resources managers faces lot of challenges in promoting the library activities and its support services. Moreover, the identification of the specific usage of the library services will be difficult in the perspective of the library. Normally, libraries plays an important role in supporting research, coursework and study materials preparation in order to help the students, researchers and public to fulfill their daily tasks conveniently. Both the users and libraries have welcomed the change and trying to adapt and pursue to achieve their potential in full and moving forward for the future development by working together and also the help of new developments and technologies the libraries may overcome the expectations and challenges of the users.

By providing the best services greater satisfaction of the library users shall be obtained. Apart from these, we need to look into the perspectives of the libraries by visualizing the librarians' strategies on future development of library services. The university libraries in Sri Lanka will increase its performance and meet the expectation of its users when this study is implemented. This study will help to have a clear understanding of how library service quality will work and which issues necessity to be considered in order to improve applicable policies and strategies, and to plan for funds and resource allocation in library system in Sri Lanka.

VI. SELECTION OF SAMPLING

At an early stage in the planning of any investigation, decisions must be made concerning the study population. That is, concerning the population of individual units (whether they are persons, households, etc.) to be investigated. The population under consideration should be clearly and explicitly defined in terms of place, time, and other relevant criteria. Gay (1987) from the American School Board Journal affirms:

In order to obtain a representative sample, random sampling would be the best single way. However, he further stated that even random sampling techniques may not guarantee a representative sample, but the probability is higher for this procedure than for any other (p.104). According to Sri Lanka University Statistics (2017), the total population for this investigation was approximately 30668 library users. The Sample size estimation from the population plays a vital role in any research study.

VII. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sekaran (2006) highlighted that the network of associations which are elaborative and is significant to a research problem as a theoretical framework. The research contained three variables namely the independent variables, dependent variable and moderating variable. The theoretical and conceptual framework explains the path of a research and grounds it firmly in theoretical constructs. A research without the

theoretical or conceptual framework makes it difficult for readers in ascertaining the academic position and the underlying factors to the researcher's assertions and/or hypotheses. This renders the research sloppy and not appreciable as contributing significantly to the advancement of the frontiers of knowledge (Adom et al., 2016).

The Dependent variable is being impacted either positively or negatively by the independent variable while the moderating variable moderates the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable. The influence of the moderating variable can either be a positive influence that further enhances the relationship between the independent and dependent variable or it can have a negative influence on the same. This moderation impact takes place while the relationship between the independent and dependent variables has already begun. This research is based on the following theoretical framework as shown in Figure 1.1.

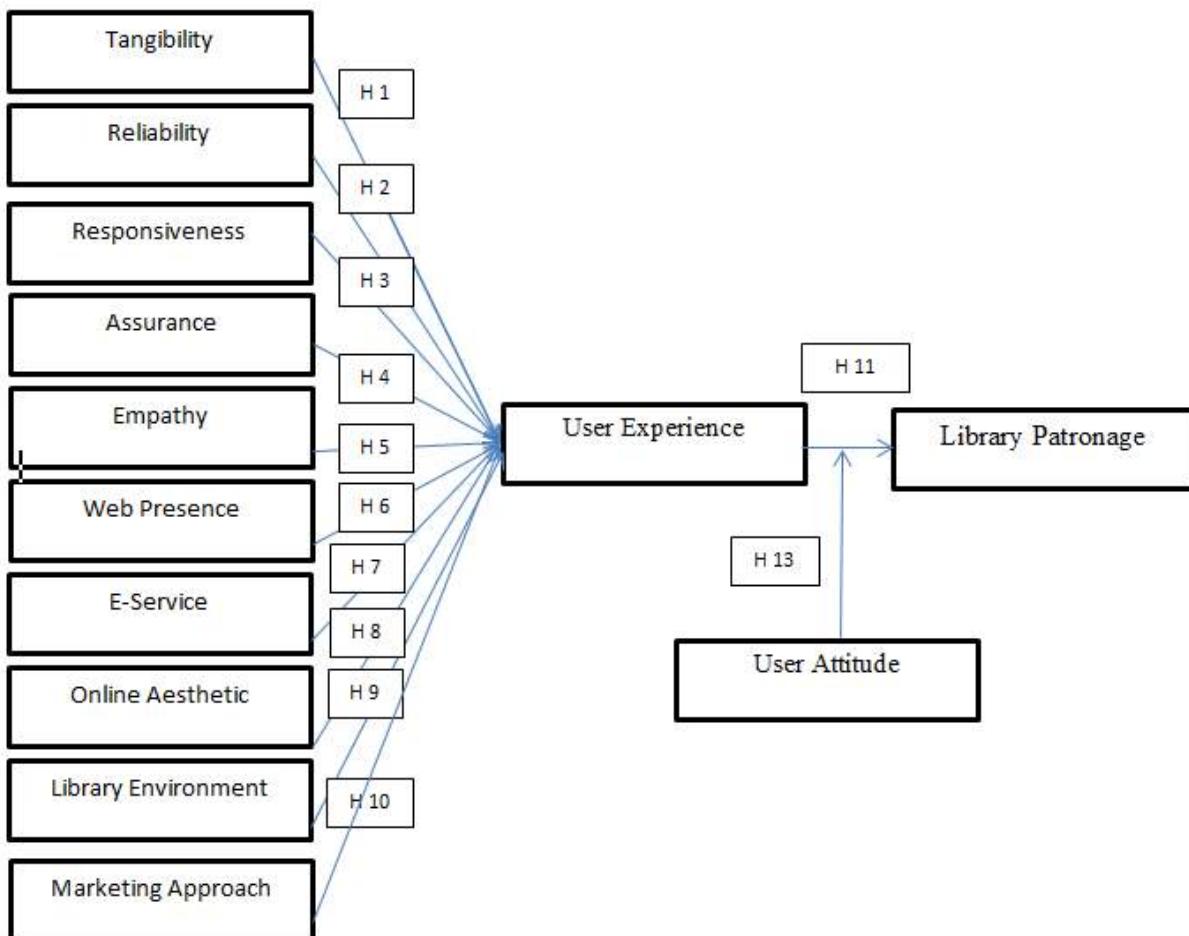
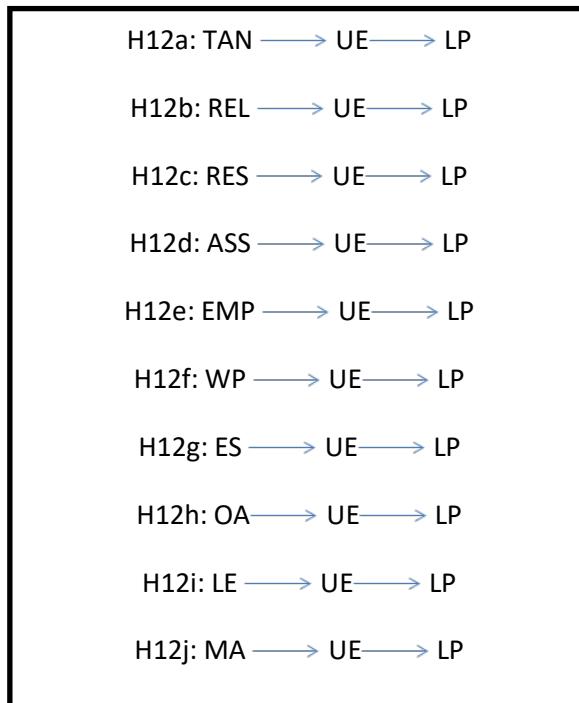


Figure 1.1: The Conceptual Frame Work investigated in the study

The main objective of this is to investigate the factors of academic library users' experience towards the library user patronage the academic libraries in Sri Lanka. The model was developed based on this aim.



VIII. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Expectation Disconfirmation Theory EDT originated from consumer behavior studies explaining the different consumer expectations of service quality from sources such as personal experience, word of mouth, advertising, etc., as well as their standard subjective ratings or satisfaction toward the service provider (Cardozo, 1965; Oliver, 1997). The difference between customer expectations and actual performance is referred to as disconfirmation, which can be either positive (with performance exceeding expectations) or negative (with performance below expectations) based on customer experience. EDT is relevant for research concerning public services as well as public management strategy and practice explained how these subjective evaluations, derived from citizen survey. EDT can help the decision-making process of ordinary citizens regarding the judgment and evaluation of various types of government services (Hero & Durand, 1985; Kelly & Swindell, 2002b; Van Ryzin et al., 2004).

EDT can be described as a five-step process. In the first step, consumers form specific beliefs or expectations from products or services before purchasing (Venkatesh and Goyal, 2010). This process is influenced by product information, organizational promotion, media reports, and feedback from prior users (Premkumar and Bhattacherjee, 2008). Second, consumers use, consume, or experience the purchased product or service and develop their own perception of the product's or service's actual performance (Premkumar & Bhattacherjee, 2008). Third, they assess the performance of the product or service by using their

expectations as a reference (Oliver, 1980). In the subsequent stages, the actual performance is mapped with the expectation to develop positive or negative experiences. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) developed the gap model of service quality based on the disconfirmation paradigm. In the present study, EDT was employed to measure customer satisfaction from the perceived quality of products or services to determine customer's satisfaction with library service quality. According to Yi (1990), positive disconfirmation implies customer's satisfaction, whereas negative disconfirmation implies less customer satisfaction.

IX. FORMULATION OF HYPOTHESES

H1: There is a positive relationship between Tangibility and customer experience.

H2: There is a positive relationship between Reliability and customer experience.

H3: There is a positive relationship between Responsiveness and customer experience.

H4: There is a positive relationship between Assurance and customer experience.

H5: There is a positive relationship between Empathy and customer experience.

H6: There is a positive relationship between Web Presence and customer experience.

H7: There is a positive relationship between E-Service and customer experience

H8: There is a positive relationship between Online Aesthetics and customer experience

H9: There is a positive relationship between Library Environment and customer experience.

H10: There is a positive relationship between Marketing Approach and customer experience.

H11: There is a positive relationship between customer experience and Library patronage.

H12a: The user experience mediates the relationship between Tangibility and library patronage.

H12b: The user experience mediates the relationship between Reliability and library patronage.

H12c: The user experience mediates the relationship between Responsiveness and library patronage.

H12d: The user experience mediates the relationship between Assurance and library patronage.

H12e: The user experience mediates the relationship between Empathy and library patronage.

H12f: The user experience mediates the relationship between Web Presence and library patronage.

H12g: The user experience mediates the relationship between E-Service and library patronage.

H12h: The user experience mediates the relationship between Online Aesthetic and library patronage.

H12i: The user experience mediates the relationship between Library Environment and library patronage.

H12j: The user experience mediates the relationship between Tangibility and library patronage.

H13: Library user attitude moderate the relationship between customer experience and library patronage.

X. CONCLUSIVE REMARKS AND IMPLICATIONS

There is no "gold standard" measure of user satisfaction" (Cohen et al., 1996, p. 843). Yet, what is more important in user satisfaction is to understand the user's experiences towards the university library services. Therefore, this is a valuable attribute for the decision makers and the librarians. The fact findings with regard to the relationship between the service qualities provided by the university library services and the library patronage and also the impact of customer experience in this regard, therefore, provides illuminating insights in developing an academic library user which is a must in the information age.

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